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New York

President: Mr. Razali Ismail . . . . . (Malaysia)

The meeting was called to order at 10.10 a.m.

Statement by the President

The President: As President of the General Assembly, I must express my shock and horror over the deaths and injuries as a result of the bombing in Jerusalem. Our hearts must go to the bereaved and we extend our deepest condolences. Our times are too often punctuated with violence and acts of extremism and desperation. We need to reach out for peace and reconciliation.

Agenda item 37 (*continued*)

The situation of democracy and human rights in Haiti

Report of the Secretary-General (A/51/935)

Draft resolution (A/51/L.77/Rev.1)

Report of the Fifth Committee (A/51/956)

The President: I now give the floor to the representative of Venezuela to introduce draft resolution A/51/L.77/Rev.1.

Mr. Escovar-Salom (Venezuela) (*interpretation from Spanish*): On behalf of the group of Friends of the Secretary-General for Haiti, I am pleased to introduce draft resolution A/51/L.77/Rev.1 to the Assembly. Austria, Belgium, Costa Rica, Denmark, El Salvador, Finland, Greece, Guatemala, Haiti, Italy, Japan, Luxembourg, the Netherlands, Nicaragua, Norway, Portugal, the Russian Federation, Spain and Sweden have been added to the list of sponsors.

In its preambular part, the draft resolution pays tribute to the Haitian people in their ongoing quest for a strong and lasting democracy, justice and economic prosperity. It supports the continuing leadership of the Secretary-General of the United Nations and the Secretary-General of the Organization of American States in the efforts of the international community in furthering political progress in Haiti.

It also welcomes the continued efforts by States to provide humanitarian assistance and technical cooperation to the people of Haiti and fully supports the contribution of the International Civilian Mission to Haiti (MICIVIH), its Executive Director and staff, and of the United Nations Support Mission in Haiti in the establishment of a climate of freedom and tolerance propitious to the full observance of human rights and the full restoration of the constitutional democracy of Haiti.

In its operative part, the draft resolution welcomes the recommendation of the Secretary-General contained in his report of 26 June 1997 to renew the mandate of the joint participation of the United Nations with the Organization of American States in the International Civilian Mission to Haiti and decides to authorize the renewal of the mandate of the United Nations component of the International Civilian Mission to Haiti until 31 December 1997.

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It also reaffirms once again the commitment of the international community to continue its technical, economic and financial cooperation with Haiti in support of its economic and social development efforts and in order to strengthen Haitian institutions responsible for dispensing justice and guaranteeing democracy, respect for human rights, political stability and economic development.

At a time in which the precarious political, social and economic situation is an additional burden for the recently created institutions that are the foundation of the state of law, the continued presence of MICIVIH continues to be decisive in the consolidation of democracy. That is why we trust that, in adopting this draft resolution, we will be helping Haiti to move forward in future under its own steam.

Mr. Lelong (Haiti) (*interpretation from French*): As we meet to consider agenda item 37 on the situation of democracy and human rights in Haiti, I wish on behalf of the Government and people of Haiti to reiterate our thanks to the General Assembly for the interest it has always shown in this question and our sincere gratitude to the Secretary-General for his tireless efforts on behalf of the state of law in Haiti.

In his report A/51/935 of 26 June 1997, the Secretary-General takes stock of the human rights situation in Haiti, assesses the functioning of the judicial machinery and prisons, and describes activities undertaken to promote and strengthen institutions. It is a chiaroscuro that stresses the progress and the deficiencies of the democratic process in Haiti, the complexity and difficulties of which were certainly underestimated.

My Government appreciates the report's emphasis on the considerable results achieved in the efforts to guarantee respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms throughout the country. Thus, in a fragile political and socio-economic situation, the people has continued largely to enjoy its civil and political rights. Freedom of speech is guaranteed and citizens may express their opinions freely and without fear. The press conveys all sorts of ideas without any censorship whatsoever. No one is persecuted or threatened for his or her political convictions.

In the area of justice, efforts have been made to improve the functioning of the judicial machinery, which remains infected by incompetence and the corruption of certain judges. An entire programme sustained by the international community is under way in order to reform the judiciary. Similarly, specific measures adopted in the penal system have allowed tangible improvements to be made in the treatment of detainees.

In the area of the National Police, we should also emphasize the ongoing progress in both its organization and its methods of work. Thanks to the assistance of United Nations personnel and friendly countries, its training continues in a satisfactory way. It is ready to begin its work and its ability to guarantee order and security in a democratic context will be severely tested. We must nevertheless deplore certain lapses which, having been brought to the attention of the authorities, have been investigated and their perpetrators punished.

As will be noted, democracy and respect for human rights are gaining ground in Haiti. The primacy of law over force is gradually becoming embedded in our habits. Outmoded structures and mentalities are in full retreat. Given our past of dictatorship, these results are not negligible.

I take this opportunity to pay a special tribute to the members of the International Civilian Mission to Haiti (MICIVIH), a small but carefully targeted Mission and an irrefutable example of successful cooperation between the United Nations and the Organization of American States, whose assistance has been essential to the promotion of democracy and human rights in Haiti. I wish in particular to mention the Mission's Executive Director, Mr. Colin Granderson, who, through his courage, selflessness and objectivity, has won the confidence and admiration of civil society in my country.

The Secretary-General has clearly indicated in his report that the progress achieved would not have been possible without the contribution of MICIVIH and that Haiti still needs this assistance.

We are convinced that the General Assembly will continue to support our efforts to strengthen democratic institutions and to guarantee greater respect for human rights by unanimously adopting the draft resolution now before it.

I cannot conclude without once again expressing our gratitude to the member countries of the Group of Friends of the Secretary-General on the question of Haiti, as well as to all the countries that sponsored this resolution.

Mr. Wolzfeld (Luxembourg) (*interpretation from French*): I have the honour to speak on behalf of the

European Union on the question of the situation of democracy and human rights in Haiti. Bulgaria, Cyprus, the Czech Republic, Estonia, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, Romania, Slovakia and Slovenia have aligned themselves with this statement. Iceland and Norway also associate themselves with it.

Since the establishment of a democratic regime in Haiti, the European Union has actively participated in the international community's efforts to create the necessary conditions for strengthening democracy and respect for human rights in the country.

For this reason, we note with concern that the Secretary-General's report states that the political situation in Haiti has deteriorated, that the economy is stagnating and that this situation is engendering a profound sense of insecurity in the country.

The European Union has also taken note of the postponement *sine die* of the second round of partial elections, announced on 12 June 1997, and of the resignation of the Prime Minister, Mr. Rosny Smarth, on 9 June 1997. The Union welcomes the recent appointment of a new Prime Minister, Mr. Eric Pierre.

Concerned by the climate in which the electoral process has taken place, the European Union expresses its firm hope that the Haitian people will be able as soon as possible to express its will in free, honest and transparent elections, held in accordance with rules and procedures accepted by all, in which citizens have the widest possible range of options and choices.

At this critical moment, the presence of the International Civilian Mission in Haiti (MICIVIH) remains crucial to the consolidation of democracy in the country. MICIVIH has contributed in large measure to the establishment of the rule of law in Haiti, through human rights monitoring, the provision of technical assistance to the Government, the promotion of democratic values and support for the consolidation of institutions in cooperation with the United Nations Mission in Haiti.

One of the major tasks of MICIVIH is the monitoring of respect for human rights. The Secretary-General's report states that although the population has continued in large measure to enjoy individual rights and fundamental freedoms, the situation with regard to respect for human rights remains fragile. In particular, the police force, which is new and rather inexperienced, has not yet done all it should to improve its human rights record.

The absence of a strategy and programme for judicial reform has thus far blocked the development of institutions and the real protection of human rights, and this in turn has compromised the development of police and prison institutions.

The European Union hopes that the new Commission on the reform of law and justice, whose creation it financed, will encourage the preparation of a draft text on judicial reform and the strengthening of institutions in this sector.

The European Union reaffirms its determination to continue its support for the strengthening of the rule of law and economic and social development in Haiti.

Between October 1994 and the end of 1996, the European Community, through the European Commission, contributed 310 million ECUs towards that end. Since then, other funds have been made available, in particular through the national indicative programme, signed in April 1997, which provides for an additional contribution of 148 million ECUs. The Community has undertaken to increase its efforts to provide aid for the judicial system and for judicial reform.

At a time when the precarious nature of the political, social and economic climate is exerting increasing pressure on the foundations of the key institutions on which respect for the rule of law depend, it is more necessary than ever that the international community continue and step up its assistance, and contribute, by its presence, to consolidating democratic institutions in Haiti.

For this reason, the European Union supports the Secretary-General's recommendation, set out in the draft resolution before us, to extend the mandate of the United Nations component of MICIVIH until 31 December 1997. The 15 member States of the Union have co-sponsored the draft resolution.

Mr. Hynes (Canada) (*interpretation from French*): I am pleased to take the floor today in support of draft resolution A/51/L.77/Rev.1. We hope that the Assembly will adopt this draft resolution by consensus.

We are meeting to debate this agenda item today first and foremost to highlight the continued progress in Haiti towards the consolidation of a peaceful and democratic society in which full respect for the rule of law and fundamental human rights prevail. The

Secretary-General notes in his most recent report that, despite the sometimes troubled political situation in Haiti, individual rights and fundamental freedoms continue to be widely enjoyed.

We welcome this assessment and the important change in Haitian society that it signals. The Haitian National Police (HNP) is one of the most important State actors in this regard, and their continued professionalization is one of the underpinnings of the generally positive trend described by the Secretary-General. We hope that the National Police can continue to register significant improvements and becomes an effective and fully functioning police force.

(*spoke in English*)

We are also meeting today to renew the mandate of the United Nations component of the joint United Nations/Organization of American States (OAS) International Civilian Mission in Haiti. Last December, the Government of Haiti sought a one-year renewal of this component. However, for financial reasons, the General Assembly was unable to fulfil that request, and therefore renewed the Mission only until the end of July. Therefore, we are now seeking to fully satisfy the terms of the request made by President Préval and to extend the Mission until the end of this year.

The joint Civilian Mission continues to carry out invaluable work. We pay tribute to the dedication of its Executive Director, Mr. Colin Granderson, and to the United Nations and OAS staff for their able assistance to the Government of Haiti in the areas of institution-building and human rights monitoring, education and promotion and, particularly in recent weeks, electoral expertise and assistance.

While the joint Mission is engaged in a broad range of activities, one aspect of its mandate — support for efforts towards judicial reform — is coming to assume ever greater significance. This is particularly true as the police become more effective in the prevention and investigation of crimes. The Secretary-General emphasized this aspect of the Mission's mandate in his report. We welcome the steps taken by the Government of Haiti to set priorities in the area of judicial reform, and we are pleased to observe that the international community is already engaged in providing considerable support to the Haitian authorities in this domain.

In sum, we believe that the joint Civilian Mission in Haiti continues to play a vital role in supporting the Haitian authorities as they effect a remarkable transition towards democracy and stability, and we hope that the international community will continue in its significant support of their efforts.

Mr. Legal (France) (*interpretation from French*): Today the General Assembly is being called upon to extend the mandate of the International Civilian Mission in Haiti to 31 December 1997.

At the end of last year, financial considerations led the General Assembly to decide to extend the mandate of the Civilian Mission only through the first seven months of 1997. That decision nevertheless left open the possibility of adopting another resolution to extend the mandate.

Considerable progress has been achieved in Haiti in the field of respect for individual rights and fundamental freedoms, as well as in the formation of a police force that respects the rule of law. The International Civilian Mission to Haiti (MICIVIH) is making a substantial contribution, particularly in strengthening institutions and education in the field of human rights. The Civilian Mission also plays an important role in assisting efforts to professionalize the National Police, complementing the United Nations Support Mission in Haiti (UNSMIH), which will be succeeded by the United Nations Transition Mission instituted yesterday by the Security Council.

This progress should be pursued in order to consolidate democratic transition. As emphasized by the Secretary-General in his report of 26 June, it is still necessary to maintain MICIVIH in a climate which, despite what has been accomplished, remains precarious in certain respects.

France participated, as part of the group of Friends of the Secretary-General for Haiti, in preparing the draft resolution before the Assembly. We provide assistance to Haiti in efforts to establish the rule of law and fully support the statement made by Luxembourg as President of the European Union. We hope that the draft resolution on this subject will once again receive the unanimous support of the General Assembly.

Mr. Richardson (United States of America): The United States has supported the efforts of the International Civilian Mission to Haiti (MICIVIH) since its inception. Last November President Préval asked that

the international community keep MICIVIH in Haiti through December 1997. In June our Mission to the Organization of American States (OAS) joined the other nations of our hemisphere in extending the OAS component of MICIVIH through the end of this year. We are proud to renew our support for the joint efforts of the United Nations and the Organization of American States in building a more democratic, just and prosperous Haiti.

As the Secretary-General's report makes clear, we must not close our eyes to the obstacles we face. The efforts of the international community have come against a backdrop of divergent opinions within Haiti over the course and pace of political and economic change. Among the issues the Haitian Government must resolve are the imperfect elections of 6 April, the approval of a new Prime Minister and the impasse over second-round elections.

The Haitian National Police has faced strikes, demonstrations and surging crime. Overall, the police has dealt competently with the challenges it has faced. But at times it has not lived up to the trust placed in it by the Haitian people. Incidents of excessive use of force, fatal shootings by police, arbitrary arrests and prolonged pre-trial detentions have continued at troubling levels this year.

Despite these problems, we should not ignore the dramatic strides forward since the restoration of democracy. The Haitian National Police continues to make progress. Administrative and operational improvements have made the force more effective in fighting crime. Police agents and *commissaires* who violate the trust given to them have been dismissed. Training by MICIVIH, the civilian police element of the United Nations Support Mission in Haiti, the United States and other donors has put the force on the right track. Let us keep in mind that the Haitian people enjoy the best police force in their nation's history.

As an impartial monitor of the human rights situation in Haiti, MICIVIH encourages respect for the fundamental freedoms of the Haitian people. Through its technical assistance programmes, MICIVIH has made impressive strides in bringing the rule of law and an effective justice system to Haiti. Equally important, the Mission has worked tirelessly to promote democratic values through classes, seminars and conferences that have reached over 6,000 ordinary Haitians.

MICIVIH plays a crucial role in the consolidation of democracy. By extending its mandate, we will send a clear signal to the people of Haiti that we stand with them in their efforts to create a tolerant, just and democratic society.

Mr. Martini Herrera (Guatemala) (*interpretation from Spanish*): I have the honour to address the Assembly on behalf of the countries of Central America in my capacity as Chairman of the Central American Integration System.

I wish briefly, on behalf of Costa Rica, El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras, Nicaragua and Panama, to state that we fully share in welcoming the recommendation in the Secretary-General's report that the joint participation of the United Nations with the Organization of American States in the International Civilian Mission to Haiti should be continued.

We trust that the General Assembly, in keeping with that recommendation, will unanimously authorize the renewal of the United Nations component of the International Civilian Mission to Haiti until 31 December 1997, in accordance with the mandate and modalities of the Mission's operations.

The President: We have heard the last speaker in the debate on this item.

We shall now proceed to consider draft resolution A/51/L.77/Rev.1.

In connection with the report of the Fifth Committee on the programme budget implications of draft resolution A/51/L.77/Rev.1, which is contained in document A/51/956, I call on the Acting Chairman of the Fifth Committee, Mr. Syed Rafiqul Alom, of Bangladesh.

Mr. Alom (Bangladesh), Acting Chairman of the Fifth Committee: I have the honour to make the following statement at the request of the Fifth Committee in connection with the General Assembly's consideration of the report of the Committee, issued in document A/51/956, on the programme budget implications of draft resolution A/51/L.77, under the agenda item entitled "The situation of democracy and human rights in Haiti", which has now been revised as document A/51/L.77/Rev.1.

The Fifth Committee noted that the mandate of the International Civilian Mission to Haiti (MICIVIH) would extend for one month beyond the mandate envisaged for the United Nations Transition Mission in Haiti and that

the administrative backstopping for MICIVIH for the month of December may need to be reviewed.

The President: I thank the Acting Chairman of the Fifth Committee for his statement.

The Assembly will now take a decision on draft resolution A/51/L.77/Rev.1.

I should like to announce that since the introduction of draft resolution A/51/L.77/Rev.1, the following countries have become sponsors: Austria, Brazil, the Dominican Republic, Honduras, Ireland and Jamaica.

May I take it that the Assembly wishes to adopt draft resolution A/51/L.77/Rev.1?

Draft resolution A/51/L.77/Rev.1 was adopted (resolution 51/196 B).

The President: The Assembly has thus concluded this stage of its consideration of agenda item 37.

Agenda item 40 (*continued*)

The situation in Central America: procedures for the establishment of a firm and lasting peace and progress in fashioning a region of peace, freedom, democracy and development

Reports of the Secretary-General (A/51/917, A/51/936)

Draft resolutions (A/51/L.75, A/51/L.76)

The President: I give the floor to the representative of Mexico to introduce draft resolutions A/51/L.75 and A/51/L.76.

Mr. Albin (Mexico) (*interpretation from Spanish*): I am honoured, first of all, to introduce the draft resolution contained in document A/51/L.75 on behalf of the sponsors. In addition to the countries listed in the draft document, which are the Group of Friends of the Guatemala peace process, the following Member States have sponsored the draft resolution: Austria, Belgium, Brazil, Canada, Chile, Costa Rica, Denmark, Ecuador, El Salvador, Finland, France, Greece, Guatemala, Ireland, Italy, Luxembourg, Netherlands, Nicaragua, Portugal, Russian Federation, Singapore, Sweden and Uruguay.

As the Assembly can see, in the preambular part the text recalls the resolution which extended the mandate of the United Nations Verification Mission in Guatemala. The draft resolution welcomes the timely implementation of the Agreement on the Definitive Ceasefire.

In the operative part of the draft resolution the Assembly welcomes the report of the Secretary-General (A/51/936), takes note with satisfaction of the progress made so far in the implementation of the peace accords and commends the Government of Guatemala, the Unidad Revolucionaria Nacional Guatemalteca and the Guatemalan people, institutions and organizations for their participation in the implementation process. It encourages the parties and all sectors of the Guatemalan society to join efforts for the implementation of the accords. In particular, the draft refers to the second phase of the Agreement on the Implementation, Compliance and Verification Timetable for the Peace Agreements.

Upon reiterating its full support for the comprehensive agenda of democratic, equitable and multicultural development, the Assembly invites the international community to continue cooperating in the establishment of most favourable conditions for the realization of the agenda. Finally, the Assembly requests the Secretary-General to keep it fully informed on the implementation process in the light of the present resolution.

We would like to place on record our gratitude to the Secretary-General, the Secretariat team and the United Nations Verification Mission in Guatemala for their constant and valuable support for the peace process.

The sponsors of the draft resolution are encouraged by the progress achieved so far, through desire and commitment, along the path of peace. We trust that the parties, and Guatemalan society in general, will continue to make the aims of peace, development and reconciliation their priority. This will require the full and timely implementation of all the commitments undertaken. The sponsors invite the Assembly to adopt this draft resolution unanimously and thereby reaffirm its commitment to working with the people of Guatemala and to supporting them in the peace process.

Let me now turn to draft resolution A/51/L.76, entitled "El Salvador". In addition to the countries that appear on the document, I am honoured also to speak on behalf of the following sponsors: Austria, Belgium, Brazil, Canada, Costa Rica, Denmark, Ecuador, El

Salvador, Finland, France, Greece, Guatemala, Honduras, Ireland, Italy, Jamaica, Luxembourg, Netherlands, Nicaragua, Norway, Panama, Portugal, Russian Federation, Sweden and Uruguay.

As the Assembly can see, in the preambular part the text refers to resolution 51/199, which established how the responsibilities of verification and good offices entrusted to the United Nations in recent times should be carried out. The Assembly, having considered the report of the Secretary-General, pays tribute to the efforts made by the people of El Salvador to achieve the general objectives of the peace process. It also pays tribute to the contribution made by various United Nations missions and personnel to the peace process and verification. The preambular part also welcomes the progress made in the past five years and acknowledges with gratitude the contributions of Member States to that progress.

In the operative part of the text the Assembly welcomes the continuing commitment of the Government and people of El Salvador to the consolidation of the peace process and urges all concerned to continue working together to complete the implementation of the peace process without delay. The Assembly decides that the support unit for the envoy in El Salvador should be closed down as a separate entity. At the same time, it welcomes the proposal of the Secretary-General to assign two international professionals and two local consultants as a unit under the administrative structure of the United Nations Development Programme for a period of six months, funded by the Trust Fund for the Mission of the United Nations in El Salvador, to follow up on the outstanding elements of the peace accords, while the verification and good offices responsibilities would continue to be carried out from New York.

The draft resolution emphasizes the importance of the continued cooperation of the various agencies, offices and programmes of the United Nations system and of the political, technical and financial support of Member States. Lastly, it requests the Secretary-General to keep the Assembly informed of further developments in the peace process as he deems appropriate.

The sponsors are convinced that El Salvador is on the threshold of a new chapter in its history. The foundations have been laid and the conditions exist to enable it to move towards a future of peace, freedom, democracy and development. We trust that the appropriate measures will be taken in El Salvador to complete the outstanding elements of the measures agreed upon without delay.

Today, the General Assembly can be satisfied at the progress made and proud of the work of the United Nations in El Salvador. For this reason, the sponsors recommend that the draft resolution contained in document A/51/L.76 be adopted unanimously.

Argentina has also become a sponsor of the two draft resolutions that I have just had the honour to introduce.

Mr. Wolzfeld (Luxembourg) (*interpretation from French*): I have the honour to take the floor on behalf of the European Union on the subject of the United Nations Verification Mission in Guatemala and the peace process in El Salvador. Bulgaria, Cyprus, Czech Republic, Estonia, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, Romania, Slovakia and Slovenia have aligned themselves with this statement, as has Iceland.

The member States of the Union are sponsors of the two draft resolutions before us.

As regards Guatemala, the European Union welcomes the progress made so far in the implementation of the peace agreements signed by the Guatemalan Government and the Unidad Revolucionaria Nacional Guatemalteca (URNG).

The first phase of the Agreement on the Implementation, Compliance and Verification Timetable for the Peace Agreements, which principally concerns the ceasefire and demobilization of members of the URNG, has been carried out successfully. The entry into force of the second phase now confronts the Government, the URNG and Guatemalan society at large with a major challenge.

The European Union pays tribute to the determination and commitment displayed by all parties to join together in building a democratic society in Guatemala based on the rule of law. It is critical for all sectors of Guatemalan society to identify themselves with the peace process and to benefit from it. They must combine their efforts to implement all aspects of the second phase of the Timetable Agreement.

The European Union would, however, like to raise a certain number of points that it considers give cause for concern. First, there is the human rights situation. Although definite progress has been made in this area, violations of human rights are still too frequent. In this context, the European Union welcomes the fact that the

Commission to Clarify Past Human Rights Violations and Acts of Violence that Have Caused the Guatemalan Population to Suffer, established by the Oslo Agreement of June 1994, is now preparing to start its work. It is only by facing up to its past that the country will be able to begin the necessary process of reconciliation and national reconstruction.

Secondly, we are concerned about institutional weakness, because the creation of solid institutions is an important prerequisite for the success of the peace process. The European Union accordingly supports unreservedly MINUGUA activities aimed at strengthening Guatemala's institutions; those activities focus most particularly on the legal system, public security, and the promotion of a multicultural, multilingual and multiethnic State, on education and promotion regarding the peace agreements and their dissemination, and on the creation of a national climate conducive to respect for human rights.

The European Union wishes again to express its appreciation of the positive way in which the United Nations has contributed to the Guatemala peace process by supporting the parties and encouraging them to bring about a firm and lasting peace and to work towards national reconciliation, so that the foundations of democracy and development may be laid in a climate of justice and freedom. The support and cooperation of the international community are essential in this connection, even though the viability of the planned changes depends above all on a sustained effort at the national level.

In recent years the European Union has made available substantial resources for the promotion of peace, democracy and more equitable development in Guatemala. Nearly half of the aid that the European Community has so far given to Guatemala — 270 million ECU — has been applied to areas covered by the peace plan.

At last January's meeting of the Consultative Group for Guatemala, the European Community also undertook to support the peace agreements by offering an additional prospective contribution of 200 million ECU. That package will be applied mainly to the following sectors: strengthening the administration of justice, support for the establishment of a national land registry, contribution to the formation of a national civilian police force, support for the enhancement of tax-raising capacity, strengthening of municipal authorities and aid for the demobilization and resettlement of members of the URNG and of the army.

The Union expresses its support for the Arzu Government's efforts to advance the consolidation of peace and the formation of a more democratic and pluralistic society in Guatemala.

As regards El Salvador, the European Union welcomes the fact that the peace process there has maintained its momentum and has produced conditions that will permit the progressive consolidation of democracy, the rule of law and respect for human rights. The European Union endorses the specific and urgent recommendations in the report of the Secretary-General (A/51/917), which are essential to the democratization of the country.

We also note that implementation of the peace agreements is incomplete in certain areas. Further reforms are required in the field of public security, in particular as regards the institutional development of the National Civil Police and the National Public Security Academy, institutions to which the European Union gives technical and financial aid. Additional efforts must be made also to reform the electoral system. It is regrettable that the recommendations made by the inter-party Commission, which was responsible for the reform, were not implemented in time to have an effect on the legislative and municipal elections in March 1997. Implementation of electoral reform is imperative, particularly during the run-up to the presidential elections to be held in 1999.

Although tensions remain, the European Union welcomes the major advances that have been made in the field of human rights, in particular the reduction in the number of arbitrary or politically-motivated executions. The Union attaches particular importance to the office of the National Counsel for the Defence of Human Rights, which must continue to be consolidated so as to become an institution of national scope: efficient, professional and independent. It is thus vital that this office receive the budgetary resources it needs to carry out its task.

Progress on the path towards the restoration and consolidation of peace in El Salvador has been in large measure dependent on the presence of the United Nations, which has been responsible for verifying the full implementation of the peace agreements in recent years: the United Nations Observer Mission in El Salvador, the Mission of the United Nations in El Salvador, the United Nations Office of Verification in El Salvador and, finally, the support unit of the Secretary-General's envoy, whose term of office just ended at the end of June 1997.

In view of the advanced stage of implementation of the peace agreements, the European Union supports the Secretary-General's recommendation set out in the draft resolution before us today, proposing the establishment, under the administrative umbrella of the United Nations Development Programme and for a period of six months, of a service comprising two international Professionals and two local consultants, which would be responsible for monitoring the full implementation of those elements of the peace agreements which have not yet been put into effect.

We are convinced that the participation of the international community, through the presence of the United Nations and the very constructive work of the Group of Friends of El Salvador, will make a positive contribution to the completion of the peace process in El Salvador.

Mr. Holter (Norway): As a member of the Group of Friends, Norway welcomes the progress made in the implementation of the peace accords in Guatemala during the first six months since the final peace agreement was signed. It is particularly encouraging that the demobilization went smoothly and according to schedule. On 3 January, Norway signed an agreement with the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) to make available $3.6 million for the crucial task of the demobilization, return and reintegration of combatants. There is every reason to commend the Government of Guatemala, the Unidad Revolucionaria Nacional Guatemalteca (URNG) and the United Nations for the successful completion of the demobilization process.

We also note with satisfaction that the Commission set up by the Oslo Agreement of June 1994 to investigate human rights violations during the conflict is now taking up its work. Norway will contribute $1 million to the work of this Commission. In total, Norwegian assistance to Guatemala this year is likely to reach approximately $20 million.

Norway continues to support the work of the United Nations Mission for the Verification of Human Rights and of Compliance with the Commitments of the Comprehensive Agreement on Human Rights in Guatemala, to which we attach the greatest importance. The Verification Mission now covers an important range of questions directly linked to the implementation of the peace accords. Human rights constitute a crucial element, and the human rights situation remains a cause for concern.

The implementation of all the elements of the peace accords and the development of a society that can meet the aspirations of the people of Guatemala represent serious challenges which will require great efforts by the Government of Guatemala and all sectors of Guatemalan society. This will also require the continued support of the international community. It is now of vital importance that the dynamics and the momentum of the process be maintained so that necessary reforms still pending can be carried out. As a member of the Group of Friends, Norway remains committed to supporting the process.

During the more than five years that have passed since the signing of the Chapultepec Agreements, we have witnessed a fruitful process of peace-building in El Salvador — a process in which the role of the United Nations has been of paramount importance. As a means to consolidate this process, Norway has supported and contributed to the United Nations presence in El Salvador and continues to participate in the training of the National Civil Police force. Parts of the Chapultepec Agreements are, however, still not implemented. It is of great importance that the necessary electoral reforms be carried out well before the next presidential elections, in 1999.

Considering that some form of international presence in El Salvador is still required, Norway supports the proposal of the Secretary-General to establish for a period of six months a small unit within the administrative framework of the United Nations Development Programme, reporting to the Department of Political Affairs, to follow up on outstanding elements of the peace accords. We welcome the suggestion that this staff be financed by funds remaining in the Trust Fund for the Mission of the United Nations in El Salvador, to which Norway has made substantial contributions.

Mr. Laclaustra (Spain) (*interpretation from Spanish*): The representative of Luxembourg spoke in this debate on behalf of the European Union. My delegation associates itself fully with his statement. I wish nevertheless to make some additional comments, as Spain is a member of the Group of Friends of the peace processes in El Salvador and Guatemala.

We trust that the General Assembly will adopt today by consensus two important draft resolutions that it is considering under agenda item 40 of its current session, entitled "The situation in Central America". They are both important because they mark a crucial phase for two Central American countries that have left behind years of savage internal conflict in order to establish themselves

as examples of peace and harmony and to face the challenges of the future in a climate of freedom and democracy.

First of all, draft resolution A/51/L.76 closes down the support unit for the envoy of the Secretary-General as a separate entity, as it concluded its mandate on 30 June. It also welcomes the proposal of the Secretary-General to assign two international officials and two local consultants to a unit under the administrative structure of the United Nations Development Programme for a period of six months, in order to follow up on the outstanding elements of the peace accords. Under this plan, the United Nations responsibilities of verification and good offices would continue to be carried out from the Headquarters of the Organization.

This arrangement seems to us very sound, in the light of the report of the Secretary-General of 1 July 1997, which underscores the need to maintain follow-up in the coming months with respect to the implementation of the outstanding elements of the peace agreements, particularly those in the socio-economic area. The fact that this arrangement was arrived at attests to the tremendous achievements in El Salvador during the last few years. The assessment of the Secretary-General in his report is very positive in recognizing the extraordinary transformation of the country.

A new stage in the history of the Salvadoran people will now begin, one full of hopes and challenges now that the consolidation of achievements is in their hands. The various political and social forces of the country, as well as the Government and institutions, should keep this aspiration alive and pursue further the reforms already begun in important sectors, such as the administration of justice and public security. These will guarantee the development of democracy in a state of law.

The entire international community will continue to accompany El Salvador in consolidating the country's development. This is attested to by the various technical-assistance and institutional-strengthening projects of the agencies of the United Nations, particularly those of the United Nations Development Programme, and the various bilateral programmes of a number of several countries. The people of El Salvador can be sure that Spain will be at their side in this collective effort.

The General Assembly is also preparing to adopt today draft resolution A/51/L.75 on the United Nations Verification Mission in Guatemala (MINUGUA), in order to launch the second phase of the Agreement on the Implementation, Compliance and Verification Timetable for the Peace Agreements signed by the Government of Guatemala and the Unidad Revolucionaria Nacional Guatemalteca, until 31 December 1997, in the light of the report of the Secretary-General of 30 June. In doing this the General Assembly wishes to underscore the importance it attaches to this phase, in which it will be necessary to build upon the measures taken in the first 90 days since the signature of the Peace Agreements and to begin their active implementation.

To its great satisfaction, the international community has seen that the firm commitment to peace displayed by the parties during the negotiating process is a constant, as has been widely demonstrated during the first phase of the implementation of the Peace Agreements. The verification of the Agreement on the Definitive Ceasefire — which was successfully carried out by the military contingent attached to MINUGUA through Security Council resolution 1094 (1997) — sets the standard that should prevail in the implementation of the remaining Agreements.

The international community is following closely the consolidation of the peace process in Guatemala and will continue to cooperate in establishing the most favourable conditions to that end. In this respect, Spain is proud to take an active role in supporting and assisting the people of Guatemala.

The constitutional, fiscal and agrarian reforms that will have to be carried out in the next few months will require a constant effort on the part of the country's political forces. They should demonstrate their readiness to be flexible and to compromise in order to achieve legislative measures that will meet the needs indicated in the various Peace Agreements. In the framework of cooperation, MINUGUA continues to carry out important activities in institution-building, as the Secretary-General points out in his report. These are aimed particularly at the justice system, public security, the promotion of a multicultural, multilingual and multiethnic State, as well as at education, the promotion and dissemination of the Peace Agreements and the attainment of a culture of respect for human rights.

Guatemala stands today at a crucial moment in its history, when all society must endorse the results attained by the parties to the Peace Agreements by implementing those Agreements daily. This is an arduous and difficult task because in many cases the rewards are neither

immediate nor tangible. Democracy-building is the task of every citizen.

In the words of a Spanish poet,

"Traveller, there is no road, the road is made in travelling".

For Guatemala the road is marked out in the Peace Agreements, and it is incumbent upon all the social and political forces, the Government, the institutions and all the people to travel it in solidarity.

Mr. Amorim (Brazil) (*interpretation from Spanish*): The delegation of Brazil takes particular satisfaction today in speaking under agenda item 40. We have received news from throughout the world indicating the persistence or resumption of conflicts. Elsewhere, we see signs that support for the Organization's activities is vacillating. That is why we regard the situation in Central America as a positive and encouraging contrast.

The fraternal countries of Central America have gone through tumultuous times, especially in the last phase of the cold war in the 1980s, when they were enmeshed in a web of conflicting external interferences. When the time came, the other nations of Latin America did not fail in their duty to do everything in their power to succour the fraternal republics of Central America. First the Contadora Group, then the Support Group, the Rio Group and the Organization of American States — under the leadership of its Secretary-General of the time, Mr. Baena Soares, and today under Secretary-General César Gaviria — extend their good offices.

The crucial factor, however, in the achievement of progress towards peace and democracy following the Esquipulas Agreements was the resolute action of the nations of the Central American region themselves. At the appropriate moment, the United Nations made an essential contribution by helping to consolidate peace and to lay the groundwork for the future of prosperity, freedom and justice that certainly awaits Central America.

Today, the Central American nations, like the others of Latin America, are devoted as a priority to resolving their social problems, moving towards development and making headway in economic integration.

We are pleased to observe the progress made in the fulfilment of the recent historic peace agreements between the Government and the URNG in Guatemala. Moreover, the elections held last month in El Salvador represent an important step forward in consolidating the renascent Salvadoran democracy. The decisions of the nineteenth summit of the Central American Heads of State, concluded on 12 July in Panama, attest to the constructive work of all the nations of the isthmus.

The people of Brazil was proud of the participation of its military observers and police officers in the United Nations Observer Mission in El Salvador and its successor, the Mission of the United Nations in El Salvador. To date, nationals of my country are still contributing to the continued success of the United Nations Verification Mission in Guatemala (MINUGUA).

For all these reasons, Brazil is a sponsor of draft resolutions A/51/L.75 on MINUGUA and A/51/L.76 on El Salvador. Despite the progress that has been achieved, we do not believe that the international community's support to the Central American nations should be interrupted. We should continue to respond to the aspirations of those countries.

The external intervention, clandestine arms supplies, battles and waves of refugees may be things of the past, but serious problems inherited from that past persist. Today, when the possibilities for success are greater, we have the opportunity to help El Salvador and Guatemala to consolidate peace and prepare for development.

Many of the basic questions facing the Salvadoran and Guatemalan nations are domestic in nature and only those peoples themselves, in the framework of their institutions, will be able to find permanent solutions to them. But the cooperation and international interest should be maintained at this decisive phase in order to address events in those two nations. Brazil, for its part, is committed to continue extending a hand of friendship and solidarity to Central America. Its success will be the success of all Latin America and of the United Nations.

Today, the General Assembly has considered another agenda item of special interest to the international community and to Latin America in particular. The resolutions adopted today by the General Assembly and yesterday by the Security Council on Haiti reflect the continued assistance of the United Nations in establishing political stability and development in Haiti, in cooperation with the Organization of American States and in accordance with the request of the Haitian Government.

Brazil conveys its best wishes to the people of Haiti and hopes that it will quickly find the path of reconciliation, democracy and progress.

The President: We have heard the last speaker in the debate on this item.

I should like to announce that, since the introduction of draft resolution A/51/L.75, the following countries have become sponsors of that draft resolution: the Dominican Republic, Haiti, Honduras, Jamaica, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia and Paraguay.

The following countries have become sponsors of draft resolution A/51/L.76: the Dominican Republic, Haiti, Honduras, Jamaica, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia and Paraguay.

The General Assembly will now take a decision on draft resolutions A/51/L.75 and A/51/L.76.

The Assembly will first take up draft resolution A/51/L.75, entitled "United Nations Verification Mission in Guatemala." May I take it that the Assembly decides to adopt draft resolution A/51/L.75?

Draft resolution A/51/L.75 was adopted (resolution 51/198 C).

The President: The Assembly will now take up draft resolution A/51/L.76, entitled "El Salvador". May I take it that the Assembly decides to adopt draft resolution A/51/L.76?

Draft resolution A/51/L.76 was adopted (resolution 51/199 B).

The President: I shall now give the floor to those representatives who wish to explain their positions on the two resolutions just adopted.

Mr. Martini Herrera (Guatemala) (*interpretation from Spanish*): The Government of Guatemala is earnestly committed to making the sustained national effort required to ensure that a strong and lasting peace in the region is successfully concluded.

The statements made by speakers before the General Assembly unanimously adopted the resolution on the United Nations Verification Mission placed in their proper context the tremendous efforts of the people and Government of Guatemala to ensure that the peace process is fully implemented. These efforts have been rewarded by those statements and by the references in the Secretary-General's report to the Comprehensive Agreement on Human Rights, the Agreement on Resettlement of the Population Groups Uprooted by the Armed Conflict and the Agreement on the Establishment of a Commission to Clarify Past Human Rights Violations and Acts of Violence that Have Caused the Guatemalan Population to Suffer.

I take great pleasure in informing the Assembly that the Commission, appointed on 22 February, is being established this very day. Its members are the Guatemalan Commissioners Mrs. Otilia Lux de Coti and Mr. Edgar Alfredo Balselles Tojo; its Chairman is Mr. Christian Tomuschat.

The report notes with satisfaction the Agreement on Social and Economic Aspects and the Agrarian Situation, the Agreement on the Strengthening of Civilian Power and on the Role of the Armed Forces in a Democratic Society, the Agreement on Constitutional Reforms and the Electoral Regime and the Agreement on the Basis for the Legal Integration of the Unidad Revolucionaria Nacional Guatemalteca, among others.

On behalf of the Government and people of Guatemala, I wish to express thanks for the emphasis which the Secretary-General's report places on international cooperation. This acknowledgment serves as a reward for and recognition of not only my country's efforts, but also the great efforts of the Mission and its members in Guatemala.

The resolution that has been adopted today by the General Assembly, in commending the Government, the Unidad Revolucionaria Nacional Guatemalteca, and the people, institutions and organizations of Guatemala for their participation in the implementation process, has endorsed the international community's constant and valuable support for the peace process in Central America.

In addition to expressing once again my thanks for the statements made by the speaker who introduced the draft and by the other speakers on this item today, I wish also to thank the co-sponsors of this resolution.

My country is committed to seeing this successful United Nations Mission continue until we can see the full success to which we all aspire.

Mr. Meléndez-Barahona (El Salvador) (*interpretation from Spanish*): On behalf of the Government of El Salvador, I take pleasure in expressing our thanks to the Secretary-General for his report on the assessment of the peace process in El Salvador contained in document A/51/917, dated 1 July 1997, which was prepared in accordance with General Assembly resolution 51/199 of 17 December 1996.

More than five years after the signing of the peace agreements in Mexico, on 16 January 1992, we are pleased and satisfied to note that the peace process in El Salvador has received a favourable evaluation, based on the level of implementation of the general objectives and commitments agreed upon by the Government of El Salvador and the Frente Farabundo Martí para la Liberación Nacional (FMLN), particularly with respect to the military, public security, human rights, the administration of justice, and electoral and socio-economic issues, among others. These achievements have produced tremendous changes in my country, as the Secretary-General's report notes.

In this respect, certain issues of particularly far-reaching importance should be mentioned, such as the demilitarization of the country, the integration of the FMLN into civilian life and the national political process, greater political openness, and the existence of a climate of tolerance reflected in the most recent elections, in March 1997.

The work towards national reconciliation and the implementation of the socio-economic agreements continues to make progress. Mechanisms for defending human rights are being strengthened, and the civilian police force is increasingly professional. In short, I believe we are on the right track towards a progressive consolidation of the democratic process that will respond to the desires and aspirations of the people of El Salvador.

However, we recognize that there are still matters that have yet to be implemented. These are small matters, yes, but real ones. My Government is committed to implementing them in accordance with the commitments and obligations it has undertaken.

It must be added that there are still structural elements we must struggle against, as an underdeveloped nation. With respect to the responsibility of the Government, we must state that we approve of the Secretary-General's proposal to terminate the functions of his Special Envoy's support unit and to end its mandate. But we welcome the designation of two international professionals and two local consultants to follow up on outstanding elements in the implementation of the commitments that were undertaken.

It has been a very long road, but we are close to the conclusion of an historic chapter in which the United Nations and the international community played an important role in ending the armed conflict in El Salvador and ensuring its transition towards peace and democracy. That process received support and backing from the international community, in particular from the Friends of the Secretary-General for the peace process in El Salvador and from the donor community, whose economic, technical and financial assistance gave vital additional support to the peace process and to the consolidation of institutions in order to avoid any backing down from the results already achieved.

I would like to pay a particular tribute to the Secretary-General and his Special Envoy, and to the men and women who served in the various missions that took part in the verification process in El Salvador. We reaffirm once again our deepest gratitude for the generous support given to El Salvador, which has enabled us to change and move forward democratically.

We know we have a great deal left to do, but the Government of El Salvador is firmly resolved to forge ahead and serve as a model of democracy and of equitable and sustainable development.

With respect to draft resolution A/51/L.76, which was introduced by Mexico and co-sponsored by the Friends of the peace process in El Salvador, as well as by my Government, and which includes the Secretary-General's proposal, we are gratified to note that it was adopted unanimously, without a vote.

We would like to emphasize, as other speakers already have, that we share the view of the Secretary-General on the importance of international cooperation, both multilateral and bilateral, to ensure that the efforts of the Government and people of El Salvador are carried out on a solid basis and can rely on sufficient resources to enable them to continue promoting peace, democracy, freedom and development in El Salvador.

The President: The General Assembly has thus concluded this stage of its consideration of agenda item 40.

Agenda item 48 (*continued*)

Strengthening of the United Nations system

Report of the Open-ended High-level Working Group on the Strengthening of the United Nations System (A/51/24)

Draft resolution (A/51/24, para. 15)

The President: The report of the Open-ended High-level Working Group on the Strengthening of the United Nations System has been circulated in document A/51/24, which contains a draft resolution in paragraph 15.

Mr. Wolzfeld (Luxembourg) (*interpretation from French*): I have the honour to speak on behalf of the European Union, Bulgaria, Estonia, Hungary, Lithuania, Latvia, Poland, the Czech Republic, Romania, Slovakia, Slovenia and Cyprus, who have aligned themselves with this statement. Iceland also associates itself with this statement.

Over the past few weeks it has been stated many times that reform of the United Nations is not an event, but a process.

The High-level Working Group on the Strengthening of the United Nations System has been a factor in this process. When the Group was set up in September 1995, the Member States emphasized their determination

> "to strengthen the role, capacity, effectiveness and efficiency of the United Nations system ... in order to realize the full potential of the Organization ... and to respond more effectively to the needs and aspirations of the Member States" (*resolution 49/252, second preambular paragraph*).

With that in mind, the European Union has actively participated in the work of the Group over the last two years. Several of its members have also contributed substantially to the trust fund which was established to assist the Group in its work.

After long and intensive negotiations, we now have a document containing a number of proposals that we regard as very useful and that will bring practical improvements to the Organization and make the work of the General Assembly and the Secretariat of the United Nations more efficient.

On the other hand, this document contains little in the way of innovative ideas or grand plans for the reform and strengthening of the system. Thus, the document does not entirely do justice to the Group's mandate

> "to specify ... ideas and proposals ... that it concludes are appropriate for the purpose of revitalization, strengthening and reform of the United Nations system". (*resolution 49/252, para. 2*)

The European Union would not wish these comments to be taken as criticism of the exemplary work of the Vice-Chairmen, but rather as a signal for the continuation of the process.

If we wish to bring to a successful conclusion the difficult but necessary exercise in which we are engaged, under the direction of the Secretary-General, we must shoulder our share of responsibility so that together we can give our Organization the new impetus it needs and prepare it for the challenges of the twenty-first century.

The European Union will support the adoption of the draft resolution before us, contained in the report of the Open-ended High-level Working Group on the Strengthening of the United Nations System, and welcomes the conclusion of the Group's work.

We wish, finally, to express our appreciation and gratitude for the way in which you, Mr. President, and the three Vice-Chairmen — Ambassador Prakash Shah of India, Ambassador Biørn Lian of Norway and Ambassador Colin Keating of New Zealand — conducted the Working Group's proceedings. Without the commitment and leadership of these men, it would not have been possible for us to successfully complete the task entrusted to us in resolution 49/252.

Mr. Petrella (Argentina) (*interpretation from Spanish*): Allow me first to express to you my sincere congratulations, Mr. President, on the manner in which you led the work of the important High-level Working Group. I also wish to congratulate the Vice-Chairmen of the Group, Ambassador Prakash Shah of India, Ambassador Hans Jacob Biørn Lian of Norway and Ambassador Colin Keating of New Zealand. They, together with you, Sir, played a very important role in conducting the work of the Working Group, the search for consensus and the preparation of this important report.

The work carried out by the Bureau was arduous and complicated because of the nature of the issues dealt with and their importance. In that respect, I believe they have achieved a work of far-reaching importance for the reform process.

In our view, one important conclusion to be drawn from this process is that, above and beyond the substance of the debate, a positive message is being sent to society, peoples and Governments, indicating that the United Nations does not consider itself immune to self-criticism and self-evaluation. The document recently prepared by the Secretary-General on an agenda for reform is one more example of the integrated vision that the Organization needs in restructuring the system. We trust that that document will be discussed in depth at the next session of the General Assembly.

As regards the report contained in document A/51/24, we believe valuable contributions have been made to the organization of the work of the Assembly, in particular through the recommendations relating to the work of the Secretary-General and the staff as a whole.

The Assembly needs to set priorities and avoid debates lacking in substance. It needs to focus on managing the agenda in order to add real value to its work. At the same time, within the context of setting priorities in the Assembly, it would be unacceptable to see attempts to undermine the budgetary autonomy of its subsidiary political bodies, such as the Decolonization Committee, through decisions that, while clearly well-intentioned, are unfounded and have been taken without consultation.

With respect to the chapter on the Secretary-General, we welcome the conclusions reached, especially those on reducing bureaucracy and staff appraisal. In this respect, it is important not to discourage people from careers in international civil service and, at the same time, to strive for the highest level of performance.

Equitable geographic distribution is necessary. I would venture to say that the Latin American and Caribbean region should expand its representation in the main areas. The present situation needs improvement, and we must take advantage of the impetus given by the reform process.

It would also be beneficial to define modalities for possible interaction between non-governmental organizations and civil society and the United Nations system. We know that the Secretary-General has new and bold ideas in this regard.

In conclusion, we hope that these matters will be considered as early as possible in a flexible manner, taking into account that new realities call for new approaches and that the democratic nature of the Organization must be enhanced.

Mr. Richardson (United States of America): It is my pleasure to welcome the final report of the Open-ended High-level Working Group on the Strengthening of the United Nations System here in the General Assembly. The United States delegation has placed great value on the deliberations of the Working Group, and I am pleased to see that this work has borne fruit today.

First of all, I would like to personally thank the Working Group's Vice-Chairmen, Ambassador Biørn Lian of Norway and Ambassador Shah of India. Their excellent leadership and personal diligence were a great asset to the Working Group.

We join many delegations in regretting Ambassador Shah's departure from New York. We will miss his personal commitment to strengthening the United Nations. Happily, though, Ambassador Biørn Lian will still be with us here in the city, and for that we are all grateful. Finally, we must also recall the valuable contribution of Ambassador Colin Keating of New Zealand to the early stages of our deliberations.

The Working Group's report is a comprehensive review of the functioning of the General Assembly and Secretariat, perhaps the most far-ranging ever undertaken by Member States. Its more than 100 recommendations represent a very constructive means of making tangible improvements to the United Nations.

Although obtaining consensus among all Working Group members was at times difficult, I think that all delegations have benefited from the process of listening to, and taking into account, the considered opinion of others. The consensus underlying this report is of special importance because it indicates a fundamental commitment by all Member States to the ongoing process of reforming and strengthening the United Nations system.

This document and the Secretary-General's Track II reform proposals announced this month together highlight a welcome and invigorating reform culture that has truly taken hold throughout the United Nations, from the Member States to component parts of the system and the Secretariat. My Government will continue to stress the

significance of sustaining the momentum that has developed in this regard and will follow it closely to ensure that we all see our ideas and our efforts transformed into measurable results.

Indeed, there is a strong affinity between the Secretary-General's reform proposals and those made by our Working Group today. It is my hope that these two developments will together drive the reform process further along. My delegation looks forward to the rapid implementation of the measures proposed by the Working Group, in the same way that it advocates an expeditious but thorough consideration of the Secretary-General's proposals in the General Assembly in the fall.

But this occasion is an opportune moment for us to remember our purpose. As we forge ahead in attempts to improve the Organization, we should reflect soberly on the principles that should and should not motivate our reform efforts.

Reform of the United Nations is not primarily about paperwork or process. It is not about reshuffling the chairs or arbitrarily lopping off limbs and organs from the institution for the sake of a neater organization chart. Nor should our ends be driven solely by the balance sheet, essential as financial concerns are to all Governments and people.

To the people of the world, the United Nations is about cherished human values — about peace and security, human rights and humanitarian relief, international justice and sustainable development. This body is a forum to advance global cooperation and understanding and to promote higher norms towards these ends. And, when all is said and done, the United Nations is a repository of humankind's highest hopes and aspirations to build a better world today and for future generations. As we proceed to improve this institution, these fundamentals should be our guiding lights. Let us not lose sight of them in our desire for change or bury them in the imperative to pile up reform proposals.

United Nations reforms should be what we, the Member States, within given means, want the Organization to do, to be and to represent, and how we want our work in pursuit of its mandate to be regarded by the people to whom we are accountable. In what we do to improve the United Nations there must be a proper fit between form and function. What remains after we are done must be capable of performing our core activities. It must serve us better than what we had before. If not, if all our labours amount to nothing more than reaffirming the status quo, or a needlessly debilitated or dysfunctional Organization, then we will not have done our jobs properly and we will have done a disservice to the world. Thus my delegation believes, as we have stated consistently, that a more streamlined, better-focused, smoother- running United Nations will be more effective and efficient in achieving its mandate and priorities. In carrying out the reforms before us, therefore, we should protect and preserve what is truly essential, rather than what is merely encrusted or only convenient. In this way, we may find the way to meet the dual challenge of accomplishing more and doing it with less.

Once again, I commend the success of the Working Group and offer my delegation's full support for the report under consideration.

Mr. Borda (Colombia) (*interpretation from Spanish*): Allow me to express the satisfaction of the Joint Coordinating Committee of the Non-Aligned Movement and the Group of 77 and China at the fact that we are about to adopt the draft resolution contained in paragraph 15 of document A/51/24, because it represents broad-based consensus achieved after lengthy and in-depth consideration and debates in the Open-ended High-level Working Group on the Strengthening of the United Nations System. The Joint Coordinating Committee was an active and enthusiastic participant in that process.

The draft resolution contains important decisions on reforming the General Assembly and the Secretariat which undoubtedly will contribute to an Organization with, in the first place, a General Assembly strengthened in its character as the highest political organ, in which all Member States participate on an equal footing, which is what gives it its true democratic character.

The decisions to examine the reports of other main organs, particularly the Security Council, deserve to be singled out as an important step towards renewed interaction between the Assembly and the Council. The decisions concerning the organization of the general debate and the work of the Assembly in general will encourage greater flexibility and efficiency in a framework of greater transparency and participation of Member States, at the same time as the length of the general debate and statements in the Main Committees will be reduced, thus freeing up valuable time for substantive debate and negotiations.

The Joint Coordinating Committee hopes that the function of the President of the General Assembly will also be strengthened to advance the purposes and principles of the Organization, including through regular consultations between the President and the presidents of other organs, particularly the Security Council and the Economic and Social Council, and greater support for the Office of the President on the part of the Secretariat.

The Joint Coordinating Committee is convinced that the agreements reached concerning the Secretariat, in particular the oversight and accountability mechanisms and areas for intensive work by oversight machinery, will also make more flexible and transparent the assessments of the fulfilment of mandates given by intergovernmental machinery to the Secretariat. Other decisions relating to the Secretariat and its staff will also result in a more participatory, efficient and independent Organization, as far as the Secretariat is concerned.

However, it is regrettable that in the time available the Working Group failed to reach agreement on certain other issues before it, including the use of the veto in selecting the Secretary-General and the use of personnel on loan. The General Assembly will have to continue to debate these issues wherever and whenever it sees fit.

There can be no doubt that the adoption of the draft resolution before us now is a very significant step in the reform process to which the Organization has committed itself. Our considerations and debates in the last two years in the Working Group should be kept very much in mind when the Assembly considers the report of the Secretary-General (A/51/950), also known as Track II, presented on 16 July 1997 because some of the proposals in it have already been widely discussed in the Working Group — discussions that may be able to make a substantive contribution to how we analyse the report.

The Joint Coordination Committee is thus able to endorse the adoption of this draft resolution, and looks forward to its prompt and complete implementation beginning in January 1998.

I wish finally to convey the gratitude of the JCC to you, Sir, for your leadership as Chairman of the Working Group, and to the Vice-Chairmen, Ambassador Prakash Shah of India and Ambassador Hans Jacob Biørn Lian of Norway, for the manner in which guided the work of the Group to a successful conclusion. Our thanks go also to Ambassador Colin Keating of New Zealand, who served as a Vice-Chairman of the Group last year with exemplary diplomatic professionalism and efficiency.

The countries members of the Joint Coordination Committee that are members of the Non-Aligned Movement and of the Group of 77 and China will follow with great attention the implementation of the provisions of the draft resolution on which the General Assembly is about to take action.

Mr. Gorelik (Russian Federation) (*interpretation from Russian*): The Russian delegation wishes at the outset to express its deep gratitude to you, Sir, and to the Vice-Chairmen of the Open-ended High-level Working Group on the Strengthening of the United Nations System, Ambassadors Biørn Lian, Shah and Keating, for the efforts that led to a successful outcome of the Group's work: the report now before the General Assembly.

We all remember the intensive discussions surrounding the work of the Working Group. It is good that, despite its very broad mandate, the Group was able to focus on some of the most important items, including those relating to rationalizing the work of the General Assembly and of the Secretariat, with a particular emphasis on improved overall efficiency. The report of the Working Group sets out a number of specific measures to improve the functioning of the entire multifaceted United Nations machinery, from the process for the appointment of the Secretary-General to the use of computers, from the independence of the Secretariat to the agenda of the General Assembly. Some of these recommendations are innovative.

The delegation of the Russian Federation will support the draft resolution contained in paragraph 15 of the report. While it is important to adopt the draft resolution, it is even more important actually to implement the proposals to enhance the effectiveness of United Nations activities, proposals that were formulated after lengthy discussion: the results of the Group's work must not remain merely in paper form. It is our hope that the breadth and specificity of the proposed measures will make a real contribution to reform of the Organization.

We note the complementary nature of the report of this Working Group and the July proposals made by the Secretary-General. The Secretary-General's recommendations develop and reflect many of the ideas and proposals considered by the Working Group, including ideas that are set out in the report and ideas

that were omitted. We therefore believe that it is important, as we carefully consider the measures proposed by the Secretary-General, not to forget about or give scant attention to the fruit of the Working Group's labours.

Mr. Takasu (Japan): I should like to express my delegation's support for the draft resolution contained in the report of the Open-ended High-level Working Group on the Strengthening of the United Nations System. We are pleased to welcome the successful conclusion of the work of the Working Group.

Over the past two years, Member States, through the Working Group, have discussed a wide range of issues to fulfil the important mandate given by the General Assembly to streamline and consolidate the entire workings of the United Nations system. We recognize that, while the Working Group succeeded in agreeing on a number of specific issues, there remain items on which consensus was not reached; these have been left for future work.

However, most important, in the process of the discussion of the Working Group, Member States were able to find common views on many points, and deepening mutual understanding of the future role of the United Nations. My delegation attaches particularly great importance to the two assumptions on the basis of which the Working Group proceeded, as reflected in paragraph 2 of the annex to the report. The first is that adequate and predictable resources will be provided to support the United Nations system, without which any recommendation would be difficult to implement. The second assumption is that the resources that will be released as a result of the reforms will be allocated to high-priority activities, such as development. My delegation attaches great importance to this concept of the reinvestment of savings in development, in order to distribute the reform dividend.

We hope that the results of the Working Group, together with the proposals the Secretary-General made last week, will contribute to giving impetus to deliberations on reform of the United Nations as a whole during the next session of the General Assembly.

Finally, I should like to express my delegation's deep gratitude to the President of the General Assembly, Ambassador Razali, who presided over the work of the Group as its Chairman. We are also grateful to the Vice-Chairmen of the Working Group, Ambassador Shah and Ambassador Biørn Lian, who succeeded Ambassador Keating, for their tireless efforts, which made it possible to bring the work of the Group to a successful conclusion.

The President: We have heard the last speaker in the debate on this item.

The Assembly will now take a decision on the draft resolution contained in paragraph 15 of the report of the Open-ended High-level Working Group on the Strengthening of the United Nations System, document A/51/24.

May I take it that the General Assembly decides to adopt the draft resolution?

The draft resolution was adopted (resolution 51/241).

The President: I wish to record my deep appreciation to Ambassador Prakash Shah of India and Ambassador Hans Jacob Biørn Lian of Norway, Vice-Chairmen of the Open-ended High-level Working Group on the Strengthening of the United Nations System, for successfully steering the Working Group to a productive outcome. Both of them, with the support of the Assembly and of the Secretariat, have worked tirelessly to ensure that this Working Group, established in 1995, would complete its work. I also wish to convey my deep appreciation to Ambassador Ahmad Kamal for chairing the Sub-group on Non-governmental Organizations.

Tomorrow, 1 August 1997, Ambassador Prakash Shah retires from the Indian Foreign Service. It is fitting that he should mark his last day in office with the adoption of this report.

As we recognize those who have contributed to the success of the Working Group, I must acknowledge the role played by the Foreign Minister of Côte d'Ivoire and President of the General Assembly at its forty-ninth session, Mr. Amara Essy, after whom the Working Group is affectionately nicknamed; the President of the General Assembly at its fiftieth session, Mr. Diogo Freitas do Amaral; and the former Vice-Chairman, Ambassador Colin Keating of New Zealand. I must also recall here the contributions of Ambassador David Birenbaum of the United States and of Ambassador Sreenivasan of India, both of whom had a role in the establishment of the Group in 1995.

With this report, this is the second Working Group of the General Assembly to complete its work, having been preceded by the Ad Hoc Open-ended Working Group of the General Assembly on An Agenda for Development. While the outcome of this Working Group

cannot be termed earth-shattering, it certainly contains specific measures to improve the workings of the General Assembly and its subsidiary bodies, as well as the Secretariat. The general debate has been formally reduced from three to two weeks. The President, Vice-Presidents and Chairmen of the Main Committees are to be elected early so as to enable the new session to begin its substantive session in earnest.

Important decisions have also been taken on a number of issues, including the following: the report of the Secretary-General on the work of the Organization; the budget process and the fulfilment of mandates; technology; oversight and accountability of the Secretariat: external and internal mechanisms; the process of selection of the Secretary-General and matters pertaining to senior management; and the independence of the Secretariat. All these decisions take effect on 1 January 1998 and should contribute towards our goal of making the United Nations efficient and effective in discharging the mandates given to it.

Without downplaying the importance of these decisions, we must at the same time recognize that this Working Group was not able to achieve consensus on the following key issues: the use of loan personnel; the question of establishing the post of Deputy-Secretary-General; public information; the term of office of the Secretary-General; in-depth review and rationalization of the subsidiary bodies; and the participation of non-governmental organizations. The Sub-group on Non-governmental Organizations, after holding 10 formal meetings, was not able to agree on the mandate.

Many of these issues were raised by the Secretary-General in his report of 16 July, and I have no doubt that Member States will seriously consider these and other issues as we embark collectively on the exercise to ensure that the United Nations remains relevant to the needs of the peoples of the world.

In the end, no delegation expressed any reservation about the contents of the report or its draft resolution. This is a considerable achievement, especially in the light of the widespread scepticism that greeted the establishment of the Working Group less than two years ago. Though no delegation achieved all that it wanted in the give-and-take negotiations, all Member States should feel a sense of satisfaction that a consensus has been achieved on such a wide range of issues of importance to the functioning of the General Assembly and the Organization.

The process of consensus-building was long and hard, and several key matters remain for further deliberations by other groups in the future, but the bottom line is that the multilateral process worked. The Members of the General Assembly, through an open-ended and transparent process, have demonstrated a willingness to reconsider their working methods and their relationship to the Secretariat and other principal organs. The Working Group has not reached any startling or radical conclusions, but it has produced a solid and sensible package of measures that constitute a sturdy foundation on which to build, step by step, in the coming years.

Finally, I would also like to point out here that in resolution 48/264, entitled "Revitalization of the work of the General Assembly, the General Assembly decided

> "to include in the provisional agenda of its fifty-second session the item entitled 'Revitalization of the work of the General Assembly'". *(resolution 48/264, para. 14)*

Indeed, the Secretariat has reflected this decision in agenda item 21, on page 5 of document A/52/150, dated 18 July 1997, which is entitled "Provisional agenda of the fifty-second regular session of the General Assembly". Clearly, delegations need to decide what to do with this agenda item when considering action on the Secretary-General's two-track proposals.

The General Assembly has thus concluded its consideration of agenda item 48.

The meeting rose at 12.05 p.m.